



The Star



Issue #118

"We Speak Their Names"

Spring 2026

Desperately Seeking Your Stories

by Kristin Holmes



Do you have a story about your father or grandfather's life that you've been meaning to send in to *The Star*? Now's the time!

For the first time since I took over as *Star* editor back in 2019, we are experiencing a shortage of orphan stories. We have room for long stories or short stories, father stories and mother stories, general stories or stories as specific as a day in the life or even the story of a fateful hour.

We welcome any stories about your family's experience in WWII - regardless of subject. If you have a story you think may be interesting to AWON Members, send it in! Even if you've shared a story with us in the past, it's always worthwhile to revisit a story we haven't heard in a while, particularly if you have new information to add, or are filling in events from a different angle.

You will find a full description of how to prepare your stories for publication on pages 12-13. Thank you!

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President's Message

by Walt Linne

Spring 2026 is here and we are starting to warm up in Indiana. Congratulations to Indiana University for winning the NCAA National Football Championship. It was IU's first national football championship ever and for your omniscient football fans it was truly a miracle. Go Hoosiers!

Introducing the Future of AWON Committee! It is my pleasure to announce and as promised in the last STAR newsletter that we have convened a committee to look into the FUTURE OF AWON. The current members of this Committee are the following Board Members: Rondy Elliott, Bob Holiday, Kristin Holmes, Gloria Layne, Marilyn Lieurance, Bob Meek, Roberta Nolan, and Rik Peirson. In addition, we are welcoming past Presidents, Board Members and any active orphan members that wish to participate. More information can be found on page 14.

The immediate goal of the Committee is to reach out to all our active members via survey to input their thoughts on the FUTURE OF AWON. The following suggestions have been noted: 1) hand the organization off to our grandchildren 2) merge with other orphan groups i.e. Korea, Vietnam, and Gulf wars orphans to form a War Orphans Network and 3) continue as is until the "last person standing" with a focus on keeping our fathers' memories alive for others to learn about them. If you are interested in joining the Future of AWON Committee, please contact me at wlinne@iu.edu or send me a note at 5745 Lee Road, Indianapolis, IN 46216.

Board of Directors elections are coming in 2026 – if you know of any grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or nieces and nephews that may want to serve on the Board, it might be time to open lines of communications about that possibility.

In Their Memory – Never Forgotten is our ultimate goal!



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A Home Away From Home:

The Story of Military Housing During WWII

by Kristin Holmes



Above: When circumstances were ideal - warm, dry weather, flat ground, few pests - tent living could be a reasonably pleasant experience for soldiers.

Below: Alas, most of the time, canvas tents were miserable to live in. Military planners sought better living conditions for the mens' health and morale.



World War II forced the Allied nations to confront a logistical challenge of staggering proportions. Housing millions of troops across six continents, in climates ranging from European winters to equatorial jungles, under enemy fire, was no easy feat. Wartime housing had to be fast, portable, and adaptable to a variety of environments and circumstances. Additionally, the need for careful use of limited resources, both in terms of manpower and finances, shaped every housing decision the Allied militaries made.

Along with repurposing existing buildings to meet the military's needs, the Allies relied on a mix of tents, prefabricated buildings, quickly-assembled wooden buildings, and improvised shelters made from locally available materials. Though these buildings were designed to be temporary, after the war many of the buildings were co-opted for other purposes and some are still in use today.

Temporary housing structures of WWII were the direct descendents of improvised, often inadequate shelters used during WWI. The Great War exposed critical weaknesses in military housing, weaknesses that engineers and logisticians were determined not to repeat. The Interwar period provided a kind of a laboratory to test new ideas about military housing, which all too soon were put to use.

While cheap wooden billets known as "B huts" have been in use since the 1800's, tents are considered the fundamental unit of military housing due to their light weight, portability, and ease of deployment. Yet as was amply proven during WWI, tents proved inadequate in just about every climate. They leaked in the rain. They were cold in winter and stifling in summer. Their canvas fabric deteriorated quickly. They offered little protection from disease-carrying insects. Though never as miserable as the trenches, tents were still a



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pretty awful place to live in the long term.

By 1939, military planners had concluded that tents were, at best, a stopgap measure. After all, soldiers in WWI had been plagued more by disease - trench foot, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, and of course the Spanish flu outbreak that killed millions - and the downsides of tent living likely contributed to that state of affairs. Planners also came to realize that poor housing and endemic disease led to extremely poor morale. Ventilation, warmth, and good drainage were of paramount importance.

In addition to maintaining troop health, both physical and mental, the logisticians turned their eye to practicality and economy. They concluded



Above: The British Nissen Huts remained in use for both military and civilians during the postwar years. This former RAF base became a neighborhood.

Below: Quonset Huts could be easily constructed by unskilled labor using the most basic of hand tools. Ease of use plus their light weight and durability meant that the Quonset became one of the most popular options for temporary military housing.



that semi-permanent military housing needed to be standardized. Camps in WWI were of inconsistent quality, with a lot of wasted materials due to lack of planning. When structures needed repair, the men had a hard time finding materials and replacement parts. As a result, housing solutions in WWII had an emphasis on modularity. The US Army developed entire catalogs of standardized buildings, allowing millions of square feet of housing to be built quickly and predictably.

Although the Allied nations developed an impressive array of temporary structures, the actual housing solutions used in any given theater were determined less by design preference and more by local conditions, climate considerations, available materials, and logistical constraints. Each region of the war imposed its own demands, and military engineers adapted accordingly.

In the European Theater, cold winters and persistent dampness, plus a lack of open space in populated areas, were the greatest problems for logisticians to overcome. In the Pacific, extreme tropical humidity, monsoon weather, heat, insects, mold, and sandy or coral-based terrain presented their own challenges. Military bases in Arctic regions like Alaska, Iceland, and Greenland had to withstand subzero temperatures, high winds, snow loads, and permafrost as a base to build upon. And in desert climates like North Africa and the Middle East, troops had to contend with intense heat, sandstorms, extreme temperature swings, and a lack of water - meaning that concrete could not be mixed.

In all climates, plus the many training camps constructed in the US and UK, the need for rapid deployment in preparation for housing millions of troops required a lot of thinking outside the box. The wide-scale ingenuity involved in developing, shipping, and creating military housing around the globe in the span of such a short time is a triumph of human intellect.

Some of the lessons of WWI had already begun to be implemented during that conflict. In 1916, Major Peter Norman Nissen of the 29th Company Royal Engineers of the British Army began to experiment with possible designs, attempting to create a portable, economical hut. He came up with a semi-cylindrical design over an inner

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AWON Grandchildren and Great-Grandchildren! Help keep AWON going into the future!

As the years pass, we will need more and more grandchildren and great-grandchildren to become active, participating AWON members to keep the memories of our Fathers, Grandfathers, and Great-Grandfathers alive and never forgotten.

Grandchildren also bring their own unique perspective to AWON, as the loss of our beloved fathers has echoed across the generations. 2026 will be an election year for the AWON Board of Directors. We would love to see AWON Descendants - grandchildren and great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews, taking on leadership roles in AWON.

If you, your younger relatives, or someone else you know might be interested in becoming more active in AWON, now is the time to open the lines of communication. In a few months we will be actively recruiting candidates, so talk to your children, grandchildren, and other relatives about the possibility of joining the AWON Board today!

***The Star* Guidelines for Submitting Material**

We want to tell your story and your family's story. We accept submissions both electronically and via US mail. If you have an article or picture and aren't sure how to submit it, that's ok. Message *The Star* and we will work with you.

Please keep text reasonable in length. 500-1000 words or 1 page is a good guideline, but we publish longer pieces too. Preference is given to material written by, for, and about AWON members and families.

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AWON Orphan Members- We want to share your story! Contribute to *The Star* today!



Let's Keep in Touch!

Be Sure to Follow AWON
on Social Media!!!



...Housing, con't from page 4

framework, with metal sheeting hung outside over the framework. This structure became known as a Nissen hut, and was used not only during the Great War, but during the decades afterwards, as an affordable way for governments to house large groups of people quickly. Nissens were used in military training facilities, prison camps, to house homeless and displaced individuals, and even for things like movie theaters and chapels. They were particularly popular in Australia, where the dry climate made for a more comfortable living experience inside a Nissen than in the colder, damper European climate.

As WWII began to ramp up, Americans saw a need for an improved version of the Nissen hut. They invented the Quonset hut as an alternative. Quonset huts are arched panels bolted together panel to panel, without an internal support structure, making them structurally stronger than Nissen huts. Quonsets can withstand heavy snow, high winds, and even earthquakes.

Additionally, putting Quonsets together is simpler than a Nissen hut; Quonsets could be erected by unskilled labor, like green recruits. The Quonsets were shipped as complete units and could be assembled in a day by a ten-person team using only hand tools. The open ends of the semi-circular building were covered with corrugated metal or plywood. The Quonsets were made with low quality steel, reserving better quality metal for more critical war efforts. They became the backbone of American camps in Britain.

170,000 Quonset kits were manufactured during the war years by the George A. Fuller construction company. Spare Quonsets were sold to the general public after the war and Quonsets remain popular to this day, both in the US and abroad. Many WWII-era Quonsets are still being used by the military, not to mention the many newer Quonsets constructed for governmental, municipal, and private use.

A drawback of both the Nissen and the Quonset hut is that the curved walls result in a lack of usable indoor space. Being metal, they were also prone to heat buildup in hot environments, and required insulation in cold climates. Condensation on the metal was a



Above: A happy family reunion as British soldier Hector Murdoch returns to his new prefab home. For the 1.5 million English families who had lost their homes to German bombs, the repurposing of prefabricated military buildings was a lifesaver.

In 1939, the British government vowed to replace all homes destroyed in the Blitz, and the affordability and quick construction of prefab homes made fulfilling that promise a reality.

big problem. This led to the invention of Theater of Operations Prefab Buildings - TO Prefabs, for short.

TO Prefabs were designed by the US Quartermaster Corps and shipped as flat, modular, wood panels that could be assembled quickly. Like Quonsets, construction of the TO Prefabs required no special training and only basic hand tools. The Prefab kits came with wall panels, trusses, flooring, and could be combined in different lengths and layouts depending on the mission.

While the wood panels had a shorter lifespan than the metal Nissens and Quonsets, TO Prefabs were easier to heat in cold climates, easier to repair with available materials, and their modular construction made it possible to reconfigure the TO Prefabs into a wide array of structures - barracks, HQ, supply depots, hospitals, classrooms, comm centers, and more. While very few of the original TO Prefabs survive today, either falling apart with age or being demolished after the war, during the war they were an important stopgap

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Above: 800 series buildings at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin

between more permanent structures and the discomfort of tents. After the war, the British continued building prefabs to take the place of homes destroyed by the Blitz. An entire generation of post-war British children grew up in neighborhoods of prefabricated buildings.

On the American homefront, away from the war zone, where temporary prefabricated buildings could be treated as semi-permanent, the Quartermaster Corps came up with the 700- and 800-series buildings. The 700- and 800-series were the backbone of American mobilization at home, turning empty fields into functioning military cities almost overnight. Unlike other prefabricated buildings meant to be shipped overseas, domestic lumber, local labor, and the ability to ship materials by rail or car enabled the 700- and 800-series to transcend their temporary status. They were sturdy, well-insulated, and very comfortable.

Developed during 1940-41, the 700- and 800-series buildings followed strict dimensional rules: 20, 24, or 40 foot widths, modular bays, balloon-frame walls, and simple gable roofs. They were fast to build, cheap, and uniform, allowing civilian contractors to build hundreds of thousands of them across the United States. These buildings became training camps, airfields, supply depots, hospitals, and administration buildings.

What set the 700- and 800-series apart from truly permanent construction was the way that their standardization could be tweaked to meet human

needs. Each building type - latrines, barracks, mess halls, chapels, headquarters - had a prescribed layout. Even the individual camps were laid out in similar fashion. Soldiers could easily navigate a camp they'd never seen before - they recognized the long narrow barracks, the mess hall with its paired kitchens, the hospital wards with the larger windows.

After the war, many of the 700- and 800-series buildings were sold off or repurposed. Schools, churches, VFW Halls, storage buildings, and even family homes grew out of the remnants of these "temporary" shells.

In the Pacific Theater, wooden structures like the TO Prefabs and the 700- and 800-series were useless. The heat and humidity of the tropics would have rotted wooden structures nearly as fast as they did tents. And while Nissen and Quonsets had their place, they suffered from a lack of ventilation and had to be built on platforms or coral fill to avoid insect infestation. This added a lot of time and work to the already challenging task of housing millions of soldiers very quickly.

Due to the many challenges of the Pacific Theater environments, housing was less a unified system than it was a series of improvisations. Climate, terrain, and

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Above: Liberty Chapel, constructed inside an 800-series building during the war years, still serves as the military chapel for Mountain Home Air Force Base, in Mountain Home, Idaho.

A Letter to...and from...the ABMC

Contributed by Gretchen Wronka and Gloria Layne

Last spring, the American Battle Monuments Commission, the government organization tasked with managing memorial sites outside U.S. soil, removed two memorial displays at Netherlands American Cemetery in Margraten, where nearly 8,300 US troops are buried. These memorial panels, which were displayed in the visitors' center, honored Black veterans who helped liberate Europe from Nazi rule.

AWON Member Gretchen Wronka sent the following letter to ABMC Secretary Delessandro and the chair of the ABMC board, plus staff members at the ABMC. She also forwarded it to Congresswoman Kelly Morrison.

Hello Secretary Delessandro and Chairman Garrett,

I am concerned that ABMC's recent removal of memorials honoring Black soldiers buried in ABMC Netherlands may begin a trend to purge 100 years of art, architecture and history from other ABMC cemeteries.

This vibrant heritage, recognized in ABMC's splendid Centennial publication, *Time Will Not Dim: American Battle Monuments Commission: a Century of Service 1923-2023*, is especially relevant to me and my family.

Six years ago today, November 16, 2019, the remains of my father 1st Lt. Loren E. Hintz excavated from an Italian farm field, the crash site of his P-47 fighter shot down in the last hours of the Allied liberation of Bologna, Italy, were buried with full military honors in ABMC Florence American Cemetery.

Like other visitors to Florence and other ABMC cemeteries, our family and friends were awed and comforted by the impact of its natural setting and extraordinary art and architecture, testimony to the American ideals of freedom and democracy for which these soldiers of all races and religions died. Cemetery superintendents and staff are stalwart in their respect for

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Left: Hintz and Wronka kids, 2019, Florence American Cemetery

Right: The Wronka-Freeman great-grandsons, October 2025.



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all those honored dead.

In remarks at the burial, my brother Loren Martin reflected that while our Dad sailed to war on a segregated troop ship, the grave mate to his left looking up the hill is Pvt. William Haskins, a member of the segregated 366th Infantry Regiment. Pvt. Haskins was killed on Feb. 24, 1945. We have laid roses on Pvt. Haskins' grave and are glad that our dad, the white grandson of German immigrants, lies beside his honorable Black comrade in arms.

My father's legacy is reflected in the faces of his great grandchildren who participated in his ABMC burial ceremony. These children were proud to help lower the cemetery flag late on that cold November afternoon. They are among the thousands of descendants of brave Americans of all races who lie together in ABMC cemeteries.

Please do not dim the glory of their ancestors' deeds by erasing history documented in ABMC cemeteries.

At the time of publication, Gretchen Wronka had not yet received a reply to her letter. However, AWON Member Gloria Layne received the following reply regarding the controversy, from Superintendent of the Netherlands American Cemetery Joe Alotto.

Good morning Gloria,

We do have African-American service members buried and memorialized at our cemetery. Like our other cemeteries overseas, our service members are buried without regard to race, creed, rank, et cetera and are provided the same honor and dignity as those buried or memorialized around them.

No stories have been erased here. We have rotated out several panels and some of them may be rotated back in sometime in the future.

One panel was removed because its language and design did not align with our overall mission or the visitor center.

We currently have one (maybe two unless I'm mistaken) soldier story panels up in our visitor center of African-American service members. I think we have one on a female nurse, also currently on display.

We endeavor to tell the stories of the soldiers buried or memorialized at our cemetery and make no distinction regarding their backgrounds.

Thank you,

Joe Alotto, Superintendent

the brutal pace of island hopping required flexibility and a willingness to think outside the box. When Marines or Army units first arrived at any given site, they made do in simple tents pitched on coral, sand, or hacked-back jungle. These tents trapped heat, sagged under monsoon rains, and offered little protection from pests. Perhaps understandably, these makeshift living quarters led to sinking morale.

Soldiers and Seabees adapted as quickly as they could, borrowing indigenous building techniques and materials. Coconut palm trunks became posts, woven palm fronds became roofing, bamboo became framing and flooring. These huts were cooler and much more livable than the canvas tents, and they could be built quickly with whatever raw materials an island happened to provide.

The Navy's Bureau of Yards and Docks, realizing that Quonsets were not up to the task of tropical living, redesigned them. Instead of the metal shell going all the way to the ground, these Pacific Huts were raised slightly off the ground to allow for ventilation. Walls could then be built of local materials or wood, if no materials were available. These buildings kept men dry in torrential rains, while still allowing for ventilation and cooling breezes. Over time, these huts, which were primarily constructed by the Seabees, became



Above - Over the course of time, the military came to adopt native building practices and materials for their practicality. Native-style buildings were easy to construct, were very economical, and were much more comfortable in the heat and humidity than the military's standard issue troop housing.

known as "Seabee Huts."

After the war, native peoples often dismantled these huts for materials to use in their own architecture. Sometimes the buildings remained standing and were used by natives as meeting places or schools due to their central locations and large size, but since indigenous building methods were already well suited to the local climate, Western buildings never became as popular for postwar family living as military structures built in other parts of the world.



Above: With some tweaks to improve air flow and allow for cooling, the military's trusty Quonset Huts could be made livable in tropical climates.

Housing in the far North demanded a completely different design philosophy - one built around survival first, and comfort second. In Alaska and Greenland, the US Military confronted extremes of temperature that froze fingers, winds that peeled roofs off like paper, and snow loads capable of crushing the sturdiest of the prefabricated buildings. Permafrost made it difficult if not impossible to dig foundations for long-term buildings. Condensation in metal buildings froze into interior ice sheets and floors became so cold that the men could not keep their feet warm.

Engineers shifted priorities to construct buildings that minimized surface area and maximized thermal efficiency - low silhouettes to fight wind, steep roofs to

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Above: Arctic conditions in the Aleutian Islands and Greenland tested the men deployed to these frigid climates and also the minds tasked with finding a solution for the problems of wind, snow, ice, and extreme cold.

shed snow, and raised floors insulated with materials ranging from sawdust to mineral wool - which unfortunately at that time was often impregnated with asbestos, leading to postwar health conditions.

The goal was to provide the fighting men with a warm bubble in a landscape that was brutal. In addition to outfitting Quonsets with heavy insulation, double doors, and vestibules to keep the cold from living areas, in Greenland, engineers built snow trench structures comprised of semi-buried huts protected by insulating snow mass. In Alaska, large installations like Ladd Field and Fort Richardson developed entire neighborhoods of insulated barracks, mess halls, and motor pools connected by boardwalks across plowed corridors. Still, the military looked for other options for modular buildings - particularly those capable of being erected atop the permafrost.

James Manufacturing Company rose to the occasion, inventing the Jamesway Hut, designed for polar conditions. The Jamesway Hut was both portable and easy to assemble, featuring wooden arches covered with insulated fabric made from glass fiber insulation and faced with flameproof muslin - a necessity in an environment where stoves had to be kept running. A layer of plastic-treated cotton kept moisture and

vermin at bay. The Jamesway Hut was lightweight and suitable for rapid assembly in extreme cold. The floors of the huts were even constructed from the crates the huts were shipped in. The Jamesway was primarily used during WWII by the Army Air Corps in the Aleutian Islands, but went on to be widely used during the coldweather campaigns during the Korean War. Modified Jamesway Huts are still in use in science stations on Antarctica and held in reserve for any military cold weather deployment.

After all that, it might surprise you to learn that there was one climate in which good old tent living was actually preferable to the alternatives - the deserts of North Africa and the Middle East. Standard Western military tents were not up to the task, however. The canvas trapped heat, collected sand, and degraded rapidly in the relentless sun. Windstorms ripped guylines loose. But military units soon learned to dig their pitched tents into the ground for stability and cooler temperatures, set up low stone or sandbag walls as windbreaks, and improvised shade cloths made of burlap or camouflage netting. This system evolved over the course of time to become a kind of micro-architecture in which pits, windbreaks, and sunscreens protected entire camps from the ravages of the sand and sun.



Above: Pitching tents during sandstorms proved to be a challenge for men stationed in North Africa and the Middle East. Eventually the troops began to use native building materials and survival strategies such as windscreens and partially underground living, plus co-opting existing buildings to survive in the desert.

Housing, continued on Page 16...

Details of Story Preparation for *THE STAR*

Here's a checklist on how to prepare articles for submission in *The Star* newsletter.

The purpose of *The Star* is to serve the needs of AWON. While these tips help make the staff of *The Star*'s job easier, please don't hesitate to contribute, even if you can't meet all these guidelines. We want to tell your family's story, honor our fallen heroes, and share news and information that AWON members find helpful above all else, and the staff of *The Star* is happy to help in any way we can. We don't sweat the details, we're here to help! But the better the quality of information you give us, the more easily we are able to do that.

Before contributing, be sure to check out the current edition of *The Star* to get an idea of the type of features we publish. Most often, we share family stories about our fathers. That having been said, we are open to any submission - general history, biographies, current news items, editorials, fiction, art, and even poetry! We also love receiving pictures, and even if we can't run everything we receive in *The Star*, the extra items we receive are often featured on the AWON website.

The Star is published 4 times a year, Spring, Summer, Winter, and Fall. We can't always fit every article into every issue and sometimes we have to hold items for the next edition to include time-sensitive items. The sooner you submit your story, the more likely it is to be run in the next edition, but sometimes circumstances arise that make that impossible. Stories that are bumped will be given top priority for the next edition. Thank you for your understanding!

It is best for us to receive stories in .doc form and photos in a .jpg form.

1. If writing a story about your father, please include as much of the following info as you're able:

- Full name, nicknames if any
- Date and location of birth
- Where he grew up
- His childhood and education
- Occupation



-Military Unit...and please don't use abbreviations, even if the abbreviations are very common.

-Location where he served

-MIA, KIA, or Date of Death

-Burial and Memorial Info

-Any additional information of historic or military importance regarding his service

2. Please don't forget to include information about your extended family as well:

- Your name...PLEASE include your full name in your contributions, we can't always figure out who you are from email alone!!!

-Your mother's full name, first and last, and her maiden name if that is germane to the story

-Details of marriage, where and when

-Father's parents' names

-Father's siblings names

-Your sibling's names and your ages when you lost your father

-Where you were born, grew up, went to school...you are an important part of this story too!

-How the loss of your father affected your family both emotionally and in a practical sense

-Your search to learn more about your father

-Your children's names and how the loss of your father has echoed across the generations

3. Tell your story in any way you feel is appropriate. While 1000 words is a good goal length, be as thorough as you feel is required to paint a full picture of your father and how his loss affected your family. We would rather have too much information than not enough!

It is best for us to receive your stories in .doc form as this allows us to edit them more easily.

Some other details that may be welcome additions:

- How and why he joined the military
- His military training...what, when, and where
- Military assignments and special duties
- Medals awarded and commendations he received
- Date he was sent overseas
- Circumstances of his death
- Circumstances of his burial
- What you have heard about the kind of man he was
- A few of his favorite things
- What you and your siblings miss about your father
- The legacy he leaves behind

4. Any photos you have are welcome additions. However, we do NOT want you to take any chances with your precious and irreplaceable pictures. For this reason, electronic files of pictures are preferred. While we at *The Star* are willing to receive photos via US Mail, scan them in ourselves, and return them to you, this does put your photos at risk of loss or damage while they travel in the mail.

To avoid this danger, it is best if you provide electronic files of your pictures. This is easier than it sounds and there are professionals available who can help you.

-Scan your photo with a scanner or have Kinko's or some other computer service bureau scan it for you

-Put the photo into a .JPG file format. If you have the option, naming the file with your father's name really helps us to identify the photos.

-Attach the electronic photo file to your email and send it to atomicsagebrush@gmail.com.

-We can also accept contributions sent by a third party

such as a child, grandchild, or friend via email, but be sure to identify who the photos are originally coming from and what article they're meant to accompany!

-If you don't have an email address and can't find someone to send the information on your behalf, we are willing to receive photos via US Mail to Kristin Holmes, Star Editor, PO Box 242, Creston WA, 99117, but this should be a last resort. Sending in the mail puts your photos at risk of damage or loss. Whenever possible, computer files are preferred to protect your precious and irreplaceable photos.

5. If your story has already been published in a newspaper or other location, it's fine to send a copy of that article IN ADDITION to telling your story in your own words. But we can't run already-published articles as written, unless you have received permission from the original writer for them to be rerun. We also cannot use photos that have been printed in a newspaper. They are not suitable for scanning. We need the original photo or a digital file to get enough resolution for publication. Newspaper articles that are scanned into a computer sent in a .PDF file are also very difficult for us to transcribe; the photos are not useable as they are part of the PDF and can't be moved separately, in addition to being inadequate resolution.

To sum up - It is best for us to receive your story in your own words, in a .doc form, with pictures sent separately as .JPG files, rather than copies of articles and photos published elsewhere.

6. To send your stories and photos electronically please send to: atomicsagebrush@gmail.com

Our preferred format is to receive stories in .doc and photos in .jpg.

And to send stories and photos via snail mail, please send to:

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Questions? Concerns?

You can always contact The Star Editor at 509-279-5241 or via email at: atomicsagebrush@gmail.com

Call for Tributes!

Add a Tribute to the AWON Website! This could be one of the most long-lasting and satisfying ways to remember your Father, Grandfather, Brother, or Uncle. Just be a current AWON Member!

Here's How: 1. Have a look at our website's TRIBUTE section at www.awon.org (click "Our Fathers") to see what others have done; 2. Check the web page on "How to prepare a Father Tribute" – (at www.awon.org/check5.html); then 3. Scan (or have a Kinko's scan) your best picture of your loved one in uniform; 4. Collect your thoughts, memories, and service record of your loved one; 5. Send your JPG-formatted image and between 500 and 1,100 words to our Tribute Stager, Nancy Sue Johnson. Her E-Mail address is . . . janceysue@gmail.com. If you need her snailmail address, just call Nancy Sue at 406/529-2315.

Don't let another day go by. AWON is honored to help you honor your Father or loved one! . . . a Tribute page is yours for the asking.



The AWON Board needs YOUR INPUT on the FUTURE OF AWON!!

Dear Members,

We need your input on a couple of big decisions the AWON Board of Directors is now facing.

One is the future of our organization. Since we are all getting older, and one day we will be gone, we have some decisions to make regarding AWON's future.

One suggestion that has been discussed is the creation of a new group that will include the orphans from ALL American wars. Not just WWII or Vietnam, but those children who lost a parent in any war - Iraq, Afghanistan, etc. Such an organization will never need to disband, because there will always be wars. It might be called "The American



War Orphans Network"-- or something like that. (still AWON!)

Another possible idea for AWON's future is to simply refocus our mission on preserving our fathers' memories and on our experiences as war orphans of the WWII generation. This might include funding the AWON website in perpetuity, encouraging participation in

programs such as the Friends of the WWII Memorial, and making sure that our memorabilia like letters and family stories be preserved in the Library of Congress, in university collections, or in the National WWII Museum.

The second arena of discussion in need of feedback is the creation of a suitable and permanent memorial to honor our founder, Ann Mix. Ideas

for this monument might include a bench with a plaque to be placed on the grounds of the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC, or a memorial plaque to be put up in Annie's birthplace and/or hometown.

But there are a limited number of Board Members and a lot of YOU! Please send any ideas you might have for either of these things to our STAR editor, Kristin Holmes at atomicsagebrush@gmail.com and she will present these to the BOD for discussion.

If your idea is used, you will be recognized and may even win a prize!

Always in their memory,
AWON Board Member
Rondy Elliott.

*Tapping into True Dedication:
Phil Kowzan, Bugler, Retires at 88
Shared on Facebook by Mike Ellis of Medical Lake, WA*

If you've ever wondered what commitment looks like, imagine Spokane, Washington's 88-year-old Phil Kowzan, lips pressed to a bugle mouthpiece, playing Taps to say goodbye to a servicemember being laid to rest at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery.

This March 27, 2026, on a bright and sunny afternoon, he played the haunting 24-note melody for the last time, or to be more precise, the 3,335th time - spread out over the last 25 years.

"I don't get too emotional. I try to concentrate on playing the best *Taps* I can. I don't want to mess up. It has to be perfect," said Phil.

But it's not easy. *Taps* requires a keen ear, strong lungs, and the ability to withstand not only grief, but also the weather.

"When you get out here, and the temperature is about 25 degrees, and the horn is cold, your lips freeze on the stem, and it's tough to control," he said.

But the weather for Phil's last performance cooperated, almost as if nature knew Phil was saying goodbye to the men and women and their families he'd played for 3,335 times before. He stood to the side, as he always does. The mournful notes floated across the cemetery, carried by a light breeze.

"This service was one of the best in I don't know how long," Phil said. "It was a little breezy and cool, but everything went off well."

And that's all he's ever hoped for - a live bugler to honor a servicemember's sacrifice. Phil started this journey back in 2001 when a neighbor, who was a veteran, died. Phil attended his funeral. He asked the honor guard if they had a bugler at the burial.

"They reached out of their car and brought out a tape recorder. I said, 'No way, not for my friend, Ivan.' So, 'I pulled out a trumpet from my car,'" said Phil.



"I just feel like, why not? I can do it. It wasn't meant to be played on a recording. It's just not personal that way. I want them to get the real thing, the live Taps."

Phil's bugle will now be silent at the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, but he hopes the tradition of a live bugler continues.

And he hopes those same, sad notes comfort those he will leave behind when it is his turn for someone to play Taps.

AWON Members -

Is your father buried in a national cemetery?
Check out the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM)!
VLM is an online memorial space managed by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). NCA manages over 150 national cemeteries to honor our Nation's veterans, and memorializes more than 3.7 million veterans interred in those cemeteries in a digital memorial, providing a VLM profile page for each veteran, to which personal touches like photos and tributes can be added.

Find out more by visiting their homepage at:
www.va.gov/remember

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Over the course of the war, more durable desert housing appeared. Not unlike the military housing that developed in the Pacific, these new structures were a hybrid of military materials with local building materials. Engineers began to use mud brick, stone, and palm-trunk roofing to create low, thick-walled huts that stayed cool during the day and warm at night. Thick walls, small openings for doors and windows, and roofs that could resist the sun's radiant heat. These structures were built with the help of local labor and based on indigenous housing. When lumber was available, both British and American troops erected lightweight timber huts with ventilation in the eaves.

While Quonsets did appear in the desert, they were terribly hot. They were modified by use of shade awnings and high slits for ventilation, but for the most part they were used as minimally as possible.

While the saga of wartime housing during WW2 is a fascinating tale of human ingenuity in the face of numerous challenges, one of the most widespread types of military housing was deceptively simple - the use of already existing structures to house troops. Every structure not built from scratch was one less drain on shipping, manpower, and limited time.

From the moment US troops arrived in the UK, they were billeted in a wide range of civilian structures - schools, hotels, boarding houses, churches, barns, even private homes. Over time, the British government constructed camps to hold the soldiers, but until the camps were up and running, the Yanks, and the Canadians, Aussies, and Kiwis who accompanied them, lived right alongside the British people, for better or sometimes for worse.

Many Brits saw the Americans as loud, swaggering blowhards, and many UK civilians were resentful of the Americans' wealth in comparison to the deep rations the British were enduring. For their part, the Americans felt that life in Britain was unpleasantly restrictive, and that British people were stuffy and had too many social rules to follow. Romances invariably blossomed between British women and the glamorous Americans,



Above: Playford Hall, Suffolk, where members of the 360th Fighter Squadron, USAF, were billeted

which didn't alleviate the tension any. Finishing the camps couldn't happen soon enough. Fortunately, after this initial tension, the US and UK troops were able to work well together, living alongside one another as comrades for the extent of the war.

This pattern of using existing structures to house troops continued as the Allies crossed the Channel into continental Europe. In France, Belgium, and the Netherlands, English-speaking troops occupied everything from chateaux and monasteries to factories, warehouses, and abandoned apartment houses. Sometimes they had permission to stay in these places, other times they simply moved faster than the military engineers could build and the troops had to take over whatever shelter they needed to survive. Already-existing structures provided shelter from the elements and from straggling enemy soldiers, allowing the saving of many lives that otherwise would've been lost.

In Italy, Greece, and other places around the Mediterranean, Allied troops found themselves living in historical ruins that were hundreds of years old. Convents, old farmhouses, and wine cellars protected troops from the hot summer days and the chilly winter weather. These locations also served as camouflage and were resistant to shellfire due to their thick stone walls. In North Africa, Allied troops reused old colonial forts, railway stations, and ancient kasbahs. These structures were more resistant to desert heat than the best of the makeshift desert camps.

In the Pacific Theater, reuse became more opportunistic,

...Housing, continued from page 16

shaped by the realities of the campaign itself. On islands heavily fortified by the Japanese, Allied forces took over captured barracks and fortifications, and happily made use of the enemy's airfields. These well-ventilated concrete structures had been built by the Japanese to withstand tropical weather, and they were surprisingly useful once cleared of hazards.

In places with prewar civilian settlements - New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, the Gilberts - Allied troops sometimes occupied mission stations, plantation houses, and trading posts. (Those who are fans of the beloved musical *South Pacific* will recognize this setting.) But simple geography limited this strategy; there just weren't that many permanent structures in the Pacific Islands to choose from, and those that existed had often been damaged or destroyed by bombing, or by the retreating Japanese. As a result, reuse supplemented but never replaced the need for tents, Seabee Huts, and other local-material housing in the South Pacific.

In Burma and India, critical stops on the way into China, existing structures were essential because the Allies struggled to import supplies to that region, especially early in the war. It was impossible to bring in building supplies over the Himalayas or through the Burmese jungles. British and American forces took over schools, monasteries, government buildings - anything with enough space for a unit to sleep.

Across all theaters, home was wherever you could make it. Whether that was a stone monastery in Italy, a Belgian schoolhouse, a British seaside hotel, an insulated Quonset in the Arctic Circle, or a Japanese-built barracks on Guam, a soldier's quarters were not just shelters but a little slice of safety in a very dangerous world.

These shelters offered the fighting men protection from the elements, a sense of security and camaraderie, and what precious little privacy a guy could muster. The global network of military housing may have been temporary in name, but permanent in memory. These were the places where men slept, wrote letters, argued, laughed, and tried to carve out a sense of normalcy in a situation that was very far from normal.



Above: The RAF stationed at Hyderabad House, India

Below: The USAF sets up shop on Iwo Jima.

Far Below: A contingent of US troops explores their new home, a former Japanese bunker.



In the end, the story of WW2 housing is really a story about adaptation. Men arrived with heads full of plans and arms full of blueprints, but the realities of war and of the world forced them to improvise. They borrowed from local traditions, repurposed all that they could, and invented new concepts when nothing else worked. These buildings were never meant to last, yet they framed some of the most consequential years of the Twentieth Century.

AWON Challenge Coins

Available NOW!



Commemorative Challenge Coins are available for AWON members to purchase. The cost will be \$25, with shipping included in that price. To order, send \$25 with your name and address to:

AWON Challenge Coin
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216

A brief history of Challenge Coins -



Challenge coins originated as military tokens of camaraderie between men in a given unit, battalion, or campaign. While military coins were given out as early as the Roman Empire, the modern tradition is traced back to World War I.

Over the following decades, Challenge Coins became a way to honor achievement and mark membership in any unit or organization. They are exchanged not only within the military but government agencies, corporations, and organizations like AWON, serving as treasured commemorative keepsakes.

Membership



This is a

- ☐ New Membership
☐ Renewal
☐ Family Membership
☐ Database Registration Only

About You:

Name _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 Home Phone _____
 Mobilephone _____
 E-Mail _____
 If you're renewing, skip to the Dues Section
 Your Relationship to Serviceman _____
 Your Date of Birth _____
 How did you hear about AWON _____

About your WWII Service Member:

Last Name _____
 First Name _____ M.I. _____
 Birthdate _____
 Hometown & State _____
 Military Unit _____
 Rank _____ Service Number _____
 Date of Death _____ Place _____
 Burial Location _____
 Wife's Maiden Name _____
 Additional information on your WWII Service Member's
 Military Service, Death, or Burial. _____

Please send your check:

Payable to AWON, include it with this form and send it to:

AWON Treasurer
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, Indiana 46216

Membership Types:

☐ **Orphan Member:** Any son or daughter of a member of the US Armed Forces, Coast Guard, or Merchant Marine who was killed, remains missing in action, or who died in the line of duty, or who later died of wounds or injuries sustained during WWII.

- ☐ **Family Member:** Other relations who are not a son or daughter.
☐ **Supporting Member:** Other individuals with an interest in WWII, who wish to support us and participate in our outreach activities and programs.

Membership Dues:

Basic Orphan Member Dues are \$25 a year – starting when we receive your check. This includes your AWON Membership Card, a Web Tribute for your father, a physical or E-version of our quarterly newsletter, **The Star**, a personal account on the AWON online List-serv, and an account on the AWON Facebook Page.

Family Member Dues are \$10 a year – includes an E-version of **The Star**, and \$25 a year – includes a printed version.

Supporting Member Dues are \$50 a year – includes either version of **The Star**.

Membership Dues Levels:

Please circle your Dues Level below:

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years
Orphan	\$25	\$48	\$70
Family (E-Star Version)	\$10	\$20	\$30
Family (Printed Star Version)	\$25	\$48	\$70
Supporting	\$50	\$96	\$140
Gold Star (Increased Donation)	\$100	\$192	\$280

Donation Considerations:

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AWON (American WWII Orphans Network) is a humanitarian, non-profit, nonpolitical service organization under Section 501(c)3 of the US Federal Tax Code. (EINB #91-1538912) Membership is not required to be entered into the Database. For more information, the AWON Website is at www.awon.org.

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The Star

"Breaking Down the Wall of Silence"

AWON Headquarters
5745 Lee Road
Indianapolis, IN 46216
www.awon.org



AWON Mission

To locate and bring together sons and daughters of those who died or are missing as a result of American involvement in World War II, honor the service and sacrifice of our fathers and provide information and support to these people who were orphaned by the war.

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